

Message Text

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ACTION OES-05

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FOR OES/ENP

DEPT PASS TO EPA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SENV, JA, US

SUBJECT: JAPANESE REACTIONS TO EPA'S NEW REGULATIONS ON VINYL
CHLORIDE (VC)

REF: TOKYO 16383

1. EPA'S DECEMBER 16 PROPOSAL ON VC EMISSION STANDARD HAS GIVEN
STRONG SHOCK TO JAPANESE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES CONCERNED AND VC
INDUSTRY, PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF ITS ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS.

2. MINISTRY OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INDUSTRY (MITI), A
POWERFUL GOVERNMENT AGENCY WHICH USUALLY TAKES SIDES WITH INDUSTRY
ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES, WAS FRANK IN VOICING ITS CONCERN THAT THE
PROPOSED MEASURE, WHEN APPLIED TO JAPANESE VC PLANTS, MAY COST
THEM "COLOSSAL SUM" FOR CONVERTING THEIR MANUFACTURING PROCESSES.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, JAPANESE SCIENTISTS INTERESTED IN VC
POLLUTION PROBLEMS ARE IN FAVOR OF EPA PROPOSAL, AND HAVE TAKEN
OCCASION TO CALL UPON GOVERNMENT TO SET STANDARDS FOR VC
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EMISSIONS IMMEDIATELY.

4. IN JAPAN, THERE ARE ABOUT 40 VC MANUFACTURING PLANTS, BUT ACTUAL STATE OF VC EMISSIONS FROM THESE FACTORIES HAS NOT BEEN CLARIFIED. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY (EA) PLANS TO FORMULATE UNIFORM STANDARDS FOR MEASUREMENT OF VC EMISSIONS BY END OF CURRENT FISCAL YEAR (MARCH 1976) SO AS TO MEASURE EMISSION CONCENTRATIONS IN MODEL AREAS DURING FISCAL 1976. ANY STATUTORY REGULATION OF VC EMISSIONS WOULD FOLLOW THE MEASUREMENT.

5. MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND WELFARE (MHW), MEANWHILE, IS EXPECTED TO SET TOLERANCES FOR VC MONOMER IN PVC PLASTIC RECEPTACLES AND VESSELS AT 1 PPM OR LESS "IN THE FIRST HALF OF NEXT YEAR." MINISTRY OF LABOR SET STANDARD FOR VC FOR WORK ENVIRONMENT AT VC PLANTS LAST JUNE, LIMITING VC CONCENTRATIONS TO 2 PPM OR LESS. IN ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDANCE NOTICE, LABOR MINISTRY LAST OCTOBER ORDERED VC PLANTS TO INSTALL VENTILATION DEVICES TO MAINTAIN THIS LEVEL.

6. A TEST PLANT FOR RECOVERING AND ELIMINATING VC MONOMERS HAS BEGUN OPERATING IN JAPAN. THE PLANT, DEVELOPED BY VINYL CHLORIDE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION, AN INDUSTRY ORGANIZATION ESTABLISHED BY 21 VC MANUFACTURERS LAST APRIL, FEATURES USE OF ACTIVATED CARBON FOR ABSORBING MONOMER. BOTH FIXED AND FLUIDIZED BED SYSTEMS ARE CURRENTLY BEING TESTED AT TWO DIFFERENT SITES. ASSOCIATION AIMS TO BUILD FULL SCALE PLANT BY MARCH 1977. COST OF VC MONOMER ELIMINATION USING THIS PLANT IS STILL UNKNOWN.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: IN LIGHT OF PROMINENT PLAY GIVEN EPA PROPOSAL IN JAPANESE PRESS, EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING FULL TEXT OF DECEMBER 16 PROPOSAL TO MEET POSSIBLE REQUESTS FROM GOJ AND PRIVATE INDUSTRY.
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